

## BLOGS

Archives;Employee Surveillance;Privacy & Information Security;Social Media & Technology

# Can Employer Surveillance Influence Employee Behavior?

A couple of recent articles in the New York Times and The Atlantic magazine caught my attention. Although the articles are from very different perspectives, both articles made me think about dishonest employees and how employers deal with them.

Lets start with the basic principle addressed in The Atlantic article. The author points out that most of us lie. Apparently, Americans lie about 1.65 times per day. Nonetheless, lying is the most disliked among the 555 personality traits ranked in a recent survey.

In the modern workplace, employers need to keep employees honest hasnt changed. Effective surveillance has always been a part of employers strategy for deterring employee dishonesty, and new technologies offer a wide variety of monitoring opportunities, such as:

- Online research and social media. The internet may be the source of information that contradicts employees claims of injury, illness, emotional distress, or other personal circumstances in a way that is valuable to the employer in dispute.
- Monitoring software. Employers can install software capable of monitoring almost any aspect of employees use of the employers electronic systems, including speed of performance, unauthorized accessing of data or internet sites, and email communication
- Surveillance methods. These systems can include cameras, microphones, and facility access recording devices
- Remote tracking. Employee location can be tracked through various GPS devices associated with cell phones, vehicles, and computers.

Research shows that employer surveillance works not only to discourage dishonesty; it may also improve business results. In the [New York Times article](#), the author points out that when restaurant employees knew that they were being monitored, they increased their sales efforts while reducing their dishonest practices.

As an employment lawyer, I was struck by the fact that neither article discussed the risks associated with using employee surveillance to alter employee behavior. Employers need to be careful about how they use these mechanisms. Watch for our next post, which will discuss how employers can minimize the risks associated with employee surveillance.